

New Round of Student Fee Hikes on the Horizon



By Yelena Akopian

[UC San Diego Guardian](#): University of California students will most likely see their tuition rise by this year's summer session as the UC Board of Regents attempts to close a budget gap of nearly \$450 million.

Taking their lead from the state budget signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last month — which assumes a 9.3 percent increase in student fees — campuses are planning to raise tuition for the upcoming summer session by the recommended 9.3 percent.

"The summer session is coming up very quickly ... but the fees won't be official until the regents make a decision," UC spokesman Ricardo Vazquez said.

University officials have indicated that fee hikes will continue into Fall Quarter, though no official decision will be made until after the regents meet in May. If the 9.3 percent fee hike is extended to the 2009-10 academic year, undergraduate tuition will increase from \$7,126 a year to approximately \$7,789.

A.S. Vice President of External Affairs Lisa Chen lobbied in Sacramento early this month for the College Affordability Act, which would put a five-year freeze on tuition and gather revenue for UC and CSU campuses by placing a 1 percent tax on California residents who make over \$1 million per year. She said further tuition increases would deter low- and middle-income students from applying to the university, potentially limiting campus diversity.

“It reflects very poor planning on [the university’s] part if they are announcing fee increases only a few months before the summer session begins,” Chen said. “These hikes would essentially be a tax on students, and the [increased] sticker price will make lower-income students think they can’t afford a UC education. The UC has not exhausted all other options.”

Lt. Gov. and UC Regent John Garamendi also expressed concern over the possible fee hikes.

“This proposed fee increase is nothing more than a \$662 a year tax increase on every student at the University of California,” Garamendi said in a statement released yesterday. “On Friday, thousands of future UC students will start receiving their acceptance letters to UC colleges. Unfortunately, as a result of the recently enacted budget, 2,300 qualified high school seniors will not enter California’s universities, and those who do will face even higher tuition. We have failed to invest in California’s future.”

To deal with declining state support, individual campuses have also announced plans to cut internal spending.

UC Berkeley announced Tuesday that it will reduce its budget by 8 percent by laying off an undetermined number of employees, significantly decreasing the hiring of new faculty and increasing student tuition and student service fees.

In a report on budget-reduction strategies released yesterday, UCSD officials revealed their long-term approach to reducing operating costs. A projected \$24.5 million will be saved in 2009-10 by lowering costs through the following measures: curtailment of nonessential travel, entertainment and meeting costs; deferment of equipment purchases; and a reduction of energy consumption.

A projected \$9.5 million will be saved by implementing a soft hiring freeze, encouraging employees to enter the voluntary employee-buyout program, redistributing the workload of vacant positions, reducing staff provisions and indefinitely postponing 48 ladder-rank faculty positions.

The campus also plans to save an additional \$2.5 million by reducing energy costs, and \$500,000 by suspending academic-enrichment programs.